

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A process for preparing dinitrotoluene, comprising the steps of

- a) reacting toluene with nitric acid in the presence of sulfuric acid to give mononitrotoluene,
- b) separating the reaction product from step a) into an organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene and an aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid,
- c) reacting the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene with nitric acid in the presence of sulfuric acid to give dinitrotoluene,
- d) separating the reaction product from step c) into an organic phase comprising dinitrotoluene and an aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid,

wherein the reaction product from step a) has a content of toluene of 0.1 to 10% by weight, based on the organic phase, and a content of nitric acid of from 0.1 to 1.2% by weight, based on the aqueous phase, and the phase separation in step b) is effected in such a way that further reaction of the toluene with the nitric acid is prevented.

Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the reaction product from step a) has a content of toluene of from 3.5 to 5% by weight based on the weight of the reaction mixture from step a).

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the phase separation in step b) is carried out by ~~means of~~ dynamic separators.

Claim 4 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the organic phase comprising mononitrotoluene from step b) is transferred to step c) without further workup.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous phases comprising sulfuric acid from steps b) and d), ~~if appropriate after a workup and concentration,~~ are reused in step a) and c).

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the reaction apparatus used for steps a) and c) are stirred tanks ~~and/or~~ , flow reactors or both stirred tanks and flow reactors.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process according claim 1, wherein step a) is carried out in ~~only~~ one reaction apparatus.

Claim 8 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein step c) is carried out in a maximum of two reaction apparatus connected in series.

Claim 9 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein step a) is carried out at a temperature in the range between 35 and 70°C.

Claim 10 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein step c) is carried out at a temperature in the range between 60 and 85°C.

Claim 11 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of nitric acid to toluene in stage a) is in the range between 0.95 and 1.12.

Claim 12 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of nitric acid to mononitrotoluene in stage c) is in the range between 1.03 and 1.10.

Claim 13 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid from stage b) is concentrated to give sulfuric acid having a concentration of from 85 to 96% and recycled in stage a).

Claim 14 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous phase comprising sulfuric acid from stage d) is admixed with nitric acid and recycled into stage a).

Claim 15 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the nitric acid supplied in stage a) and stage c) has a concentration of from 58 to 100%.